

# Dakota County 2023 Thompson County Park Inclusive Improvements and Natural Area Restoration



VI-2023

Thompson County Park is located in West St. Paul, Dakota County's most diverse population. The 58-acre park, adjacent to Highway 52, is connected to South St. Paul's Kaposia Park and Kaposia Landing by the River to River Greenway. The urban park offers a variety of natural habitats to explore — from hilly savanna to shady woodlands.

Scenic trails, including one around Thompson Lake, and other amenities make Thompson County Park a popular destination for all ages. The park serves the outdoor recreational needs of the more than 50,000 residents who live in northern Dakota County.

The Thompson County Park Master Plan identifies improvements prioritized over the next 10 years. Since the plan was adopted in 2020, Dakota County has invested \$3 million for an accessible playground, a plaza and picnic areas, lakeshore restoration and interpretive signage. An additional \$3 million in state funding would allow for the design of more improvements:

- Rest area and picnic shelter along River to River Greenway
- Land bridge over Highway 52 connecting Thompson County Park and Kaposia Park
- Farmstead interpretation, including observation tower, picnic shelter and trails
- Sound wall along Highway 52
- Pollinator habitat
- Stream restoration
- Sledding hill
- Dakota Lodge renovations for greater public access
- Sensory garden and lawn improvements

**The issue:** Thompson County Park is an urban park serving a diverse community. The park offers natural habitats to explore, recreational spaces for residents and visitors, and access to the River to River Greenway. While Dakota County completed an initial phase of park enhancements, the master plan identifies additional projects to further improve the park.

**The solution:** State funding to design park improvements that will improve community access, restore native habitat, extend the park's ADA-accessible trail system and enhance the overall park experience.

**State request: \$3 million**

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